

Understanding creativity, across sectors and across cultures

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Just what is creativity? While most of us have an idea of what the word means, a clear and simple definition is not so easy to agree on. Variouslly defined as the ability to generate new ideas, make new connections and solve problems, creativity can also refer to the ability to express original or novel ideas or produce useful products.

One thing is sure: creativity manifests itself in a variety of fields and contexts - from works of art and design to [scientific breakthroughs](#) and entrepreneurship. Many policy makers agree that the innovative capacity of our economy, for example, is closely linked with human creativity. For healthy economies, creativity needs to be encouraged and harnessed to full advantage.

The EU-funded CREATIVE project, 'Creativity across cultures', led by researchers at the Otto Friedrich University in Bamberg, is addressing the need to better understand creativity, and particularly the roles played by education and culture.

Individual differences in creativity have been investigated in the past, and education has generally been seen as a determining factor in enhancing creativity, innovation and [competitiveness](#). But project partners say the specific role of culture in creativity is still largely unstudied.

This gap in the research is surprising, given the growing importance of globalisation, multi-national and presumably multi-cultural organisations. Insights into the influence of culture on creativity in these settings could be quite useful.

The CREATIVE project represents a unique collaboration. The partners have a wide range of expertise, from cross-[cultural psychology](#) to statistics and applied computer science. And there is a selection of international artists who are also contributing their expertise.

Work to investigate creativity will comprise three innovative studies. First, [cultural differences](#) in creativity will be documented in five countries, and a new theoretical model of the relationship between culture and creativity will be tested.

Next, researchers will investigate cultural differences in creative analogical reasoning by asking subjects to solve complex problems. Finally, creative differences within cultures will be studied, with the aid of prominent experts in the visual arts, literature, music, and design.

The results of this work are expected to have implications for both individuals and international teams. Being able to identify which cultural factors can predict creativity and which ones limit creativity will help organisations and businesses establish better environments for fostering creative thinking and working.

With creativity now recognised by the EU as a key driver of European development, the work of the CREATIVE team promises to open new doors, building better understanding and promotion of [creativity](#) in the sciences, in arts and entertainment, and in business.

More information: Project factsheet
cordis.europa.eu/projects/rcn/107474_en.html

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